

To speak at Cancer Crusade banquet

Bednarik likens old to new in pro football

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ONLY THREE PLAYERS in the history of the National Football League have recorded a prestigious triple of awards. The guest speaker at Wednesday night's banquet for the third annual Bucks County Cancer Crusade All-Star Football Game is one of the elite.

Charles "Chuck" Bednarik, formerly an outstanding center and linebacker with the Philadelphia Eagles, will be the featured speaker at open banquet at the Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa, proceeds from which will go to the American Cancer Society.

Bednarik, Jim Thorpe and Don Hudson are the only men to have been selected to the College Football Hall of Fame, the Pro Football Hall of Fame and the All-Time NFL Team, picked on the league's 50th anniversary in 1970.

He has always been a seriously pragmatic philosopher of football and remains so to this day. And when he speaks, people listen.

IN A RECENT DISCUSSION, for example, he offered some outspoken reflections on the transition in the game which was the source of his livelihood for more than 14 years.

Bednarik was primarily concerned with the new World Football League and the players, fans and high-financing owners who are making a go of it.

"The NFL is good for the players as far as the financing goes. It hasn't even begun and they are already making good money," Bednarik said. The formation of the American League helped those of us in the NFL in the same way. I'm sure that many of the salaries will continue to increase to an even more ludicrous size. But you can't fault the players for that. It's a great benefit to many of them already."

But the two great qualifiers in Bednarik's opinion were the

influence of the money on the game and the availability of talent.

"THERE IS NO QUESTION in my mind that the guide in pro football today is the almighty dollar," Bednarik said. "I think they are beginning to concentrate more on the money than on the game."

And I don't know if the fans can take it all. I question if a couple of franchises in one city will work for one thing. I don't know but I kind of have my doubts.

In Tampa, Orlando and Jacksonville, there are going to be new football teams in each of those cities next year. Those cities are so close together and there is really not that great amount of population there. I think it will probably saturate the market," the former Penn State star added.

And I honestly don't know if there is that much talent around for all of these new teams," Bednarik said. "I certainly don't see it. The most important man on a football team is the quarterback and I don't think they have enough good quarterbacks today."

AN EIGHT-TIME SELECTION as All-Pro and anchorman on the 1960 NFL champion Eagle team, Bednarik also expressed alarm with a shift in attitude among the players. He agreed with a recent comment by Johnny Unitas that players in pro football today just ain't what they used to be.

"When Unitas says the attitude of the players about the game is not as good as it used to be, he is 100 per cent correct," Bednarik said.

"It reminds me of a comment I heard recently from Pete Retzlaff, former general manager of the Eagles. He said, 'You know, Charlie, when we were in training camp and walking to the practice field, we would joke around a lot but the talk would always be about football. When the kids today walk to the practice field they are reading the Wall Street Journal and mostly concerned with where they are going to invest their money.'"

He said the breakdown began with the merger of the NFL and AFL.

WHEN THE NFL HAD only 12 teams it was a one-way street. You had the best players playing their hardest all of the time," Bednarik said.

"But now the really good talent has become somewhat thin," he added. "A lot of the clubs have pretty much sat back on their teams. Before, when you had 55 players on a team, you had 33 good players."

For the players who have capitalized on the easy money of the current football boom, Bednarik retained a sympathetic and admittedly jealous regard.

"People who are jumping leagues are doing it with a selfish aspect. But if you can make the amount of money Warfield Kirk and Coonka are making — why, it would take them three years in the NFL to make that much," Bednarik said. "I probably would have done the same thing they do."

BEDNARIK DID NOT FARE BADLY himself in the sala-

ry department during his playing days. But he insists the increasing step-ups in pay have done little for the type of competition.

I was the highest paid lineman in the NFL in 1960, '61 and '62. But I had to get a job as soon as I got out," Bednarik said. "These guys today don't have to worry about those pressures. You would think the caliber of football would improve. But it hasn't that much."

And the pandemic, according to Bednarik, spreads far beyond the world of professional football.

"You can relate these changes to all pro sports," he said. "It is especially apparent in basketball. It is the worst. How can they get that much money for only playing before 3,000 or 4,000 people a game."

And all those sports we thought were minor sports have become major sports all of a sudden. Tennis, for one, has made an incredible transition.

"In a way I'm kind of jealous of them all. Maybe I was born just a little too soon. But who knows — 10 to 15 years from now it may be worse, with cities like Phoenix and others growing and looking for teams."

BUT NO MATTER THE EXTENT of the changes Bednarik would not likely forfeit his days among some of the greatest players of his time.

For example, he speaks with uncontrollable pride about his selection as Lineman of the Decade for the 1950's. And his voice fills when he goes over the list of sports representatives who joined him in that honor. Those men included Arnold Palmer, Jimmy Brown, Warren Spahn, Willie Mays, Rocky Marciano, Eddie Arcaro, Maurice Richard, Willie Mays, Roger Ward, Del Miller and Bob Cousy.

WHEN YOU CAN DROP NAMES like that, it would never be too difficult to capture attention. And when Bednarik approaches the microphone Wednesday evening, he should easily do just that.

Banquet to aid cancer drive

Chuck Bednarik, an exceptional two-way performer on the 1960 NFL champion Philadelphia Eagles team, will be the guest speaker at the banquet for the third annual Bucks County Cancer Crusade All-Star Football Game.

The dinner will be held at the Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa, north of Doylestown, Wednesday

evening at 7 p.m.

The banquet is open to the public and tickets are \$10 each. Proceeds from the banquet and the game, which will be played June 14, at Neshaminy High School, will go to the American Cancer Society.

Tickets for the game will be on sale at the door.